

Aina, Raymond Olusesan

Images of Africa and the resilience of ignorance

ZEP : Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik 37 (2014) 4, S. 25-30



Quellenangabe/ Reference:

Aina, Raymond Olusesan: Images of Africa and the resilience of ignorance - In: *ZEP : Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik* 37 (2014) 4, S. 25-30 - URN: urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-121039 - DOI: 10.25656/01:12103

<https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0111-pedocs-121039>

<https://doi.org/10.25656/01:12103>

in Kooperation mit / in cooperation with:

ZEP

Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung
und Entwicklungspädagogik

"Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik e.V."

<http://www.uni-bamberg.de/allgpaed/zep-zeitschrift-fuer-internationale-bildungsforschung-und-entwicklungspaedagogik/profil>

Nutzungsbedingungen

Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Die Nutzung stellt keine Übertragung des Eigentumsrechts an diesem Dokument dar und gilt vorbehaltlich der folgenden Einschränkungen: Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

Terms of use

We grant a non-exclusive, non-transferable, individual and limited right to using this document.

This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. Use of this document does not include any transfer of property rights and it is conditional to the following limitations: All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Kontakt / Contact:

peDOCS

DIPF | Leibniz-Institut für Bildungsforschung und Bildungsinformation

Informationszentrum (IZ) Bildung

E-Mail: pedocs@dipf.de

Internet: www.pedocs.de

Mitglied der


Leibniz-Gemeinschaft

„Wie muss man sich als Afrikaner oder Afrikanerin vorkommen, wenn man in Europa nur vom Krisenkontinent Afrika in den Zeitungen liest und im Fernsehen nur Exotismus und Hungerbäume präsentiert werden?“ Mit dieser Frage beginnt das Editorial einer ZEP-Ausgabe aus dem Jahre 1996 zum Thema *Afrika* oder genauer: „*Good News from Africa*“. Ausgangspunkt bildete damals die vielgelobte Jugendaktion von Misereor und dem BDKJ (Bund der Deutschen Katholischen Jugend), mit demselben Titel, in der die krisen- und kriegsfixierte Medienberichterstattung über Afrika kritisch durchleuchtet wurde. Das ist nun fast 20 Jahre her und doch immer noch aktuell, denn an den medialen Darstellungen in Bezug auf Afrika und den damit oftmals verbundenen exotistischen, kulturalistischen und latent oder offen rassistischen Tendenzen hat sich bisher wenig Grundlegendes geändert. Demgegenüber hat sich allerdings der fachliche kultur- und rassismussensible Diskurs in Bezug auf Bildungsprozesse in den vergangenen 20 Jahren deutlich weiterentwickelt. Vor diesem Hintergrund versuchen wir in der vorliegenden ZEP einige Aspekte dieses jüngeren Diskurses aufzugreifen und für afrika-bezogenes Globales Lernen fruchtbar zu machen: *Norbert Frieters-Reermann* und *Claudia Bergmüller* führen aus ethnopschoanalytischer Perspektive in die Thematik ein. Sie skizzieren in ihrem Beitrag das Potenzial dieser theoretischen Perspektive für die Thematisierung Afrikas und den Umgang mit (eigenen) Afrikabildern im Kontext Globalen Lernens. *Elisabeth Dulko* und *Anke Namgalies* richten ihren Blick auf Afrika-Darstellungen in deut-

schen Schulbüchern des Faches Geschichte der Sekundarstufe I und II. In der Fortführung der Studie von Anke Poenicke aus dem Jahr 2001 untersuchen die beiden Autorinnen, was sich von damals auf heute in Bezug auf das, was Schüler/-innen aus diesen Schulbüchern über Afrika lernen, verändert hat. Sie legen den Fokus ihres Beitrages somit auf den Aufbau theoretischen Wissens im Rahmen formaler Bildungsprozesse und ziehen am Ende ihres Beitrages Konsequenzen für die Rolle von Pädagog/inn/en. *Susanne Krogull* untersucht demgegenüber das Entstehen von Afrikabildern im Rahmen internationaler Jugendbegegnungen. Sie fokussiert somit erfahrungsbasiertes Lernen im non-formalen Bildungskontext. Auch sie leitet aus ihren Untersuchungsergebnissen Empfehlungen für die Praxis ab. *Susanne Timm* präsentiert in ihrem Beitrag zwei Lehrbeispiele aus dem Hochschulkontext, in denen – einmal im Rahmen eines Bachelor- und einmal im Rahmen eines Masterseminars – Bildungsverhältnisse in Afrika behandelt wurden. In den von ihr skizzierten didaktischen Vorüberlegungen einerseits und der Schilderung der darauf bezogenen Lehrerfahrungen andererseits wird deutlich, wie unterschiedlich Studierenden-gruppen die ihnen präsentierten Inhalte rezipieren und welche Konsequenzen daraus für den Umgang mit deren vorgefassten Vorstellungen von Afrika-bezogenen Zusammenhängen resultieren können. *Raymond Olusesan Aina* stellt abschließend Überlegungen dazu an, wie es zur Entstehung negativer Bilder über „Afrika“ überhaupt kommen kann und welche Beweggründe mit der Produktion die-

ser Bilder verbunden sein können. Dabei macht er deutlich, dass das Entstehen dieser Bilder nicht nur in Industrieländern, sondern auch in afrikanischen Ländern selbst provoziert wird.

Wir haben die vorliegende Ausgabe der ZEP mit dem Titel *Afrikabilder* versehen. Dass es das Afrika und somit auch darauf bezogene Bilder eigentlich nicht gibt, ist uns bewusst. Doch der sehr vereinfachende und provozierende Titel *Afrikabilder* verweist bereits auf den Kern der Problematik, die wir mit dieser Ausgabe der ZEP bearbeiten und diskutieren wollen. Denn irgendwo kommen sie ja doch her, diese Vorstellungen, dass es „Afrikabilder“ gibt. Und wenn dem so ist, welche Herausforderungen ergeben sich dann für das Globale Lernen, um mit dieser vereinfachenden Sicht zu brechen und einen differenzierten Blick zu ermöglichen?

Wir wünschen allen Leserinnen und Lesern eine anregende Lektüre und darauf aufbauende intensive und produktive Auseinandersetzungen über ihre Bilder von Afrika.

*Claudia Bergmüller und
Norbert Frieters-Reermann*

Bamberg, im Januar 2015

Impressum

ZEP – Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik
ISSN 1434-4688

Herausgeber:

Gesellschaft für interkulturelle Bildungsforschung und Entwicklungspädagogik e.V. und KommEnt

Schriftleitung: Annette Scheunpflug/
Claudia Bergmüller

Redaktionsanschrift:

ZEP-Redaktion, Lehrstuhl Allgemeine Pädagogik, Markusplatz 3, 96047 Bamberg

Verlag:

Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Steinfurter Straße 555,
48159 Münster, Tel.: 0251/26 50 40
E-Mail: info@waxmann.com

Redaktion:

Barbara Asbrand, Claudia Bergmüller, Hans Bühler, Asit Datta, Julia Franz, Norbert Frieters-Reermann, Heidi Grobbauer (Österreich), Helmuth Hartmeyer (Österreich), Susanne Höck, Karola Hoffmann, Ulrich Klemm, Gregor Lang-Wojtasik, Sarah Lange, Volker Lenhart, Claudia Lohrenscheit, Bernd Overwien, Marco Rieckmann, Annette Scheunpflug, Birgit Schößwender, Klaus Seitz, Rudolf Tippelt, Susanne Timm

Technische Redaktion:

Sabine Lang (verantwortlich) 0951/863-1832, Sarah Lange (Rezensionen), Markus Ziebarth (Infos)

Anzeigenverwaltung: Waxmann Verlag GmbH, Martina Kaluza: kaluza@waxmann.com

Abbildungen: (Falls nicht bezeichnet) Privatfotos oder Illustrationen der Autoren

Titelbild: Addis Abeba © Daniel Kassa/Fotoausstellung „Sichtwechsel“ s. S. 39 in diesem Heft

Erscheinungsweise und Bezugsbedingungen: erscheint vierteljährlich; Jahresabonnement EUR 20,-, Einzelheft EUR 6,50; alle Preise verstehen sich zuzüglich Versandkosten; zu beziehen durch alle Buchhandlungen oder direkt vom Verlag. Abbestellungen spätestens acht Wochen vor Ablauf des Jahres. Das Heft ist auf umweltfreundlichem chlorfreien Papier gedruckt. Diese Publikation ist gefördert von Brot für die Welt – Evangelischen Entwicklungsdienst, Referat für Inlandsförderung, Berlin.

ZEP

Zeitschrift für internationale Bildungsforschung
und Entwicklungspädagogik

Mit: Mitteilungen der DGfE-Kommission
Vergleichende und Internationale
Erziehungswissenschaft

4'14

- | | | |
|-----------|----|--|
| Themen | 4 | Norbert Frieters-Reermann/Claudia Bergmüller
Afrikabilder aus ethno psychoanalytischer Perspektive |
| | 9 | Elisabeth Dulko/Anke Namgalies
„Repräsentation“ Afrikas in deutschen Schulbüchern am
Beispiel des Schulfachs Geschichte (Sek I und II) –
eine Stichprobenanalyse |
| | 15 | Susanne Krogull
Arm aber gemütlich – Afrikabilder deutscher Jugendlicher |
| | 20 | Susanne Timm
Universitäre Lehre im Spannungsfeld globaler Kontexte –
exemplarische Befremdungen beim Lernen über Afrika |
| | 25 | Raymond Olusesan Aina
Images of Africa and the Resilience of Ignorance |
| Kommentar | 31 | Globales Lernen und die Debatte um Postkolonialität/
Die Komplexität der Stärkung mündiger Subjekte |
| VIE | 34 | Neues aus der Kommission/Nachruf für Alfred K. Tremml/
Nachruf für Heiner Rudersdorf/Konferenz „Transformative
Bildung für eine zukunftsfähige Entwicklung“/
Fotoausstellung „Sichtwechsel“ |
| | 40 | Rezensionen |
| | 43 | Informationen |

WAXMANN

Raymond Olusesan Aina

Images of Africa and the Resilience of Ignorance

Abstract

Images about Africa in the northern hemisphere are generally negative and pessimistic. In spite of instant global communication, why have these images persisted till date? This contribution shall revisit these perceptions and the images embodying them to unearth the motivations and rationale. The central argument, based on some narratives and experiences, is that ignorance feeds these images and stereotypes. Furthermore, positionality of non-African experts and some groups of African scholars and activists contribute to this culture of ignorance and paternalism. The contribution shall end with an ethical evaluation of the persistence of the images and the extent of moral responsibility of the authors and carriers of the racist stereotypes embedded in the images.

Keywords: *Africa, Development, Education, Ethics, Racism*

Zusammenfassung

Bilder über Afrika in der nördlichen Hemisphäre sind meist negativ und pessimistisch. Trotz der gegenwärtigen globalen Kommunikation halten sich diese Bilder hartnäckig. Warum? In diesem Beitrag wird darauf abgezielt, diese Bilder und die in ihnen enthaltenen Vorstellungen kritisch zu reflektieren und mit der Verbreitung dieser Bilder verbundene Beweggründe und Motive ans Tageslicht zu bringen. Basierend auf Erzählungen und Erfahrungen lautet das zentrale Argument, dass Ignoranz diese Bilder und Stereotypen befördern kann. Darüber hinaus tragen nicht afrikanische Expert/inn/en sowie einige Gruppen afrikanischer Wissenschaftler/innen und Aktivist*innen zur Kultur von Ignoranz und Paternalismus bei. Der Beitrag endet mit einer ethischen Beurteilung der Beständigkeit dieser Bilder sowie dem Ausmaß an moralischer Verantwortung von Autor/inn/en und Vertreter/innen der diese rassistischen Stereotype enthaltenden Bilder.

Schlüsselworte: *Afrika, Entwicklung, Erziehung, Ethik, Rassismus*

Images are powerful. They speak louder than words and remain in our minds regardless of facts. Fela Anikulapo Kuti, the late Afro-Jazz legend, was confronted with images of Africans when he got to England in the 1950s. In a track titled, "Africa Center of the World", he sang in Pidgin English:

I go London to study 21 years ago. I be student for London 21 years ago. Do you know English man dey take style touch my nyansh? Do you know why English man dey touch my nyansh? Ignorance; that is the reason. Dem say I get tail, like monkey tail. Do you see what I mean? Ignorant action built on wrong education, wrong information. White supremacy built on ignorance. Western civilisation built on ignorance. Dem say I get tail like monkey tail, wrong information. Enlightenment – na im we dey now.

Some English people touched his rear to see if he had a tail like monkeys, one of the images of Africans: primates who happen to exhibit behaviours like human beings. Today, one can say at best, the dominant image of Africans is that of uncivilised and backward human beings. I got an unmistakable sense of this in October 2009 when I participated in the annual Missio Aachen appeals in Germany. That year's theme was on Peace and Reconciliation in Nigeria. It was to coincide with the Second Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for Africa themed Peace, Reconciliation and Justice.

So during my appeals I went to a gymnasium in Münster. This is an elite secondary school. I prepared a PowerPoint presentation using Microsoft Office 2007 edition. Since I was going to this elite school it was deemed unnecessary to take my laptop along. Unfortunately, the laptop I was offered had the 2003 edition. There was compatibility problem. So with the students seated eagerly waiting we started trying to solve the compatibility problem all to no avail. It was during this time that I heard a concerned student blurting to her teacher, "how can he be using Microsoft office 2007 while we are using 2003 edition? How can we be so backward?" There was a perception of image of the African standing in front of them. He was not expected to be ahead of them technologically. The student probably had the perception that Africans are backward in relation to Germans. Do you blame her? I don't. It was painful hearing that. But I felt pity for that student and many like her with that perception which they very likely picked up from the various images about Africa and Africans in the media and their studies even in an elite German gymnasium. They are simply educated into ignorance.

I remembered this episode as soon as I started this contribution on images of Africa in European development discourse and the schools. This contribution is written in United States in between visits to confreres around the country. I was confronted endlessly with the common images and perceptions

among Americans also. Images about Africa in the Euro-American media and spaces are stereotypical and predictable. Africans are backward, primitive, unintelligent, dirty, hungry, poor, desperate, violent, and perpetually at war with themselves.

Facts and Realities in Africa

Africa has the fastest growing population in the world, with about a billion people. Its land mass can accommodate Europe, USA, and parts of China and India ("Understanding the Size of Africa" 2011, p. 4). There are fifty-four countries with diverse cultures and languages. The continent has six time zones. It is growing economically as well. It has megacities just as it has slums, like any continent. Some years ago a Belgian lady married to a Nigerian resigned her job as a primary school teacher in Flanders because she could no longer stand the pupils being taught the images and perceptions of Africa that were far from the truth. After travelling with her husband to Nigeria, she was dazed by the reality. Nigeria had megacities, internet, dual carriage roads. She never saw wild animals except at zoos. She never saw AK-47s except with the Police at checkpoints. When she returned to Belgium she shared her experience with her pupils. One of them contested her saying there were no cities in Africa. This teacher tried to convince the pupil. She ran out and went to call the Head Teacher. When the Head Teacher got to the class, he told the pupils in the presence of their teacher that she was lying. There were no cities in Africa. This Belgian lady tendered her resignation the following day. She could no longer teach untruths about Africa.

Re-Presentation of Africa and Resilience of Ignorance

'Re-presentation' is critical to images about Africa. It offers another way of seeing a reality but not exactly as the reality exists. Hence, representation serves a hermeneutic function. The following are some of the images that re-present Africa in the West.

Genetic and Intellectual Inferiority: Hegel and Jefferson's Legacies?

Bujo 1998 argues that Eurocentric racism succeeded on a massive scale because of the philosophical speculations of key Europeans, especially Friedrich Hegel. In his famous *History of Philosophy*, Hegel postulated that the Negro (black Africans) had nothing in common with humanity, erroneously located in Caucasians (135–137). Brennan 1995 reminds us of what Thomas Jefferson, one of the founding fathers of America, variously stated about the dogma of Black inferiority that justified the images and stereotypes Caucasians had of the black race:

'Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason, and imagination, it appears to me, that in memory they are equal to the whites; in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid; and that in imagination they are dull, tasteless, and anomalous' (p. 73).

This is part of the authoritative sources for the centuries-long belief in the innate inferiority of the blacks, such that they can only be looked at with paternalism and pity. Assuredly, many today will rise in defence of Hegel and Jefferson that we should not be anachronistic since they were children of their age. However, are their protégés far off their standpoint?

Images of Africa in the media and schools are generally negative and with racial undertone. Pictures of Africa reflect the myth that Africans are primitive, savage, and lacking socio-political organisation and skill. Being genetically and intellectually inferior, Africans are unable to plan, or care for themselves, because they are perpetual children. They are lazy, incompetent, and possessing "poor cognitive and operative capacity" (Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007, p. 85). Their salvation lies in Caucasians helping them to learn and embrace superior western culture.

The foregoing leads us to the predictable synonyms for Africa: primitive, poverty, war, famine, disasters, starvation, corruption. This western fiction constructs Africa as "the continent of poverty *par excellence*" (Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007, p. 83, emphasis in original). This Africa has no universities, factories, modern cities, research centres, modern communication facilities, academics, or skilled workers. Its peoples have little or no sense of English language. Sometime in July 2014, a boy of about eight years asked me at a Chicago suburb, "Where did you learn your English?" If I could smile at this boy's innocent ignorance in the age of instant global communication and connection, I could not do the same when asked the same question by a middle-aged woman, who by appearance and carriage, is a Caucasian elite. When I responded that I learnt my English in Nigeria, she probed further, "Do you speak English in Nigeria?" I gave her a quick lesson. English language is Nigeria's *lingua franca*. Besides, our English teachers were taught by the British, the owners of the language. She backed off, saying, "Ok. I see."

Another image of Africa is that of an exotic land of primates and adventure. Hence, anyone dreaming of adventure and the purity of human society before it got tainted by western civilisation longs to go to Africa. This desire to experience the raw and primitive Africa is strong and prevalent. However, not everyone can make the journey. This Africa can be brought to them. I did not reckon with the prevalence of this image till I visited the Chicago Lincoln Park. At one of the entrances, a big sign post welcomes visitors as they embark on an "African Journey". It points to a portion of the sprawling park that has been created to resemble, feel and smell like an African jungle. One could see on the face of the whites that it must feel like homecoming for the black visitors.

Instrumentalisation of Africa

There is instrumentalised study of and quirk reasoning about Africa in the global North. Africa is not studied as an end in itself, or for its inherent value. On the contrary, Africa is studied as long as it bolsters Euro-American superiority and vision of development. It is not surprising that there are over 100,000 non-Africa experts in Africa, maintained at a cost of over \$4bn (Mkandawire 2007, pp. 18–19). Some argue provocatively that the bulk of the money raised from these development campaigns does not go to the targeted 'victims'. The contributors actually support more the NGO workers and partners (Dolinar/Sitar 2013; Mkandawire 2011; Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007). Dolinar/Sitar 2013 (p. 28) state, "Everything is impregnated with the business" of fundraising). I will not go as far as this because we do know that development experts in Africa are not all inimical to African peoples. A lot have sacrificed themselves

even literally to help some dire situations. Just yesterday I read on twitter that a British nurse who contracted Ebola virus disease and was taken back to Britain for treatment said he could not wait to go back to Sierra Leone. According to him, the people needed his help. Regardless of my caveat above, it is important to revisit a grain of truth about the connection between images of Africa used by development experts and conflict of interests.

This is where quirk reasoning comes in. This reasoning is aptly stated by Mkandawire 2011 (p. 21): “the less the information is available, the more firmly opinions about it (Africa) can be held”. So images that present one-dimensional information of African contexts are favoured over and above the total picture. In order to maintain development experts, argue their relevance, and raise sufficient funds for their various development projects for African peoples, there is need for poignant and moving images and narratives. One usually hears ‘keep the stories simple and moving’. I remembered being told this during the 2009 Missio Campaign in Germany. I was asked to speak to a group of sophisticated and professional benefactors. With my perception of this group, I presented, through some pictures and statistics, the realities and contexts of Nigeria’s lack of peace and the financial needs for peacebuilding which Missio Aachen spearheads. Generally, this was my approach. On at least two different occasions, I was told by my guides to keep the stories simple and moving next time. People do not understand the complexities, and the aim is to raise as much money as possible. I remember once reading an article with the telling title, ‘Not enough flies to create the right effect’. It was a criticism of an insufficiently gruesome image of African peoples for HIV/AIDS funding.

Images of Geographical Ignorance

The diversity of Africa is almost absent in the images and narratives about the continent. Many in the northern hemisphere have the image of Africa as a single country, where everybody knows everybody. While hardly referring to persons from distinct European or American countries as merely Europeans or from the Americas, nationals from various African countries are simply “Africans”. Whenever I introduced myself as a Nigerian, during my vacation in the US, I found several persons’ reaction laughable and pitiable. I immediately notice how people found it difficult to shake hands with me. For many, they thought I meant Ebola-struck Liberia. They generally relaxed only after saying Nigeria and Liberia are two different countries. In a small town in Wisconsin, a grandmother told me how worried she was of her granddaughter who recently went to Africa for her medical training. Ebola virus disease was the source of her worry. Knowing the ignorance of an average American about Africa’s diversity and land mass, I asked her where the granddaughter was. She replied, Johannesburg. I laughed, and asked her not to worry because her granddaughter was safe. It is at least six hours flight between Johannesburg, South Africa and Monrovia, Liberia. She felt relaxed, even though not completely at peace because she still could not get over it that Africa was not just a small town where everybody is within the reach of all. It is not strange for Africans in Europe or North America to be asked if they knew somebody from an African country that is hours away by flight. These

anecdotes about Africa’s mythical monolithic identity are not isolated cases. They are endemic.

How many Europeans or North Americans can name at least ten African countries? (Bason 2011, p. 6). In a recent study on Americans’ knowledge of international geography (Jones 2013), one gets the impression that the continent is hardly a part of the international community. Only South Africa and Sudan merit mention when it came to what Americans know about Africa. Jones focused on two things Americans know so well – HIV/AIDS (South Africa) and recent genocide (Sudan) (pp. 51–52, 53). No African country was mentioned in a world map to test Americans’ knowledge. Middle East scored the lowest (12–18 %). Perhaps Jones spared Americans the embarrassment of lower scores if Africa had been included. Or perhaps Africa is not part of that globe that needed to be known by the 21st century future North American professional. This is a demonstration of “the sceptre of Africa’s irrelevance” (Mkandawire 2011, p. 2).

Undoubtedly, Africa has marginal significance in contemporary politics and globalisation. In fact, my impression going round the US and during my sojourn in Europe can be summed rhetorically thus, “were Africa to disappear, nobody would notice” (Mkandawire 2011, p. 2). In most of the places I visited in the US, I kept giving crash information sessions on some things about Africa. The major news networks had little or nothing about Africa, except exceptional crises like Ebola virus disease. It is possible for an average European and American who has not met an African to live and die without knowing that this continent is the second largest and second most populous after Asia. In global economics, at least from a Euro-American perspective, Africa is perceived as the weakest (p. 3). Was it not till mid 2014 before United States saw the immense and strategic importance of Africa? This was because China and India are dealing with Africa as equal partner and are set to reap bountifully from this approach. Hence, quite patronisingly, we read with bemusement, “I see Africa as world’s next major economic success story – Obama” (Vanguard 2014). How many Europeans and North Americans know that of the twenty fastest growing economies in the world between 1950s and 1970s, nine were African countries (Mkandawire 2011, p. 12)?

The Route of Transmission

The school system is the principal route of transmission of Africa’s distorted images in the Euro-American world (Bason 2011, p. 6). This is not farfetched. Children in this world are taught early about the ‘whites’ cultural and historical pre-eminence; this pedagogical approach accords peripheral status to others unlike the Caucasians. Within this frame, the Europeans and Americans are the exemplar of enlightenment, progress and humanity. This route of transmission is so successful that, according to a survey, up till the first decade of the third millennium a good number of North Americans have a condescending attitude towards Africans. Africans are regarded as ‘backward’ and ‘need assistance’ because they cannot see through their development. Recolonisation might actually not be a bad idea. It is a form of ‘help’ to be as developed as the Europeans and Americans (Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007, p. 86).

The school system is still succeeding judging from various narratives and anecdotes I have heard and read about recently. How else can one make sense of secondary and post-secondary graduates still seeing the African continent as an untamed forest? A teacher in Boston, USA, sometime in 2008, posed the following question to her students about a friend's impending visit to Africa: "What will my friend see when she goes to Africa?" The children quickly rattled off a list: 'Animals. Yeah, animals... Men with spears hunting animals'" (Randolph, Fall 2008). Some years ago, a blog on Voice on America website, "The Student Union" discussed what Africans studying in the US face about their images (Rashe, April 23, 2012). A participant summed up the lack of impact the school system has made in ridding US citizens of their 'ignorance': "Sad to hear that 15 years after I went to college and with the advent of the ubiquitousness (sic) of the internet, these views still exist. I'm American and when I went to school, all of my friends were African. I was the poorest one in the bunch. lol" (Ibid.). The Belgian teacher who resigned did so because she could no longer be part of this pedagogical tradition. The young boy and middle-aged woman who asked me in a Chicago suburb where I learnt my English got the idea that Africans do not speak English most probably from school, reinforced of course by the media and popular discourse around them.

Complicity of Africans and Africanist Scholars

Indeed, some negative images are true and were caused by Africans. Injustices of incompetent local administration in post-colonial societies shattered the utopia of post-colonial idealists: the utopia hinged on the "premise of moral justice" (Ilesanmi 2001, p. 253; Povey 1970, quotation on p. 824). Post-colonial enemies of real humanity are ethnocentrism and other forms of discrimination along gender and class lines. The worst of these in my estimation is a burgeoning culture of impunity and criminality of the State and powerful non-State actors. These are constitutive of Africa's post-colonial concerns. Perhaps this is fuelling Afro-pessimism among African scholars and experts who unwittingly collaborate in spreading Africa's negative images. In trying to promote their vision of what Africa ought to be, they place themselves at the service of Euro-American foreign policies on Africa. Given that the principal audience of the Africanist scholars are mainstream educational and media institutions, they hardly give sufficient information about the concrete realities of Africans (Murunga 2008, pp. 42–43). Consequently, they help reinforce existing stereotypes and images in the classrooms and the media.

Similarly, some Africans also help to strengthen these reductionist images in their quest for 'development aid'. Many shamefully present exaggerated stories and distorted images to ignorant and unsuspecting western audience. Their western counterparts in development campaign sector are too glad to have these Africans because of the authority of positionality accorded 'insiders'. I was shocked in Scotland in 2006 about a story I was told. A Nigerian priest came to make appeals for starving children due to the Nigeria-Biafra war. I felt so angry that a fellow country man and priest will prey so much on people's ignorance. During one of my Missio Appeals in 2009, I was asked about the Nigeria-Biafra war. When I told them the

war ended in 1970, many expressed their shock because they had the impression it was ongoing. Some persons must have been feeding them untrue stories. I guess the list of the complicity of unscrupulous Africans is endless.

Lessons Learnt and Ethical Concerns

Racism is central to understanding the resilience of ignorance about Africa. Racism can be defined as a belief in the superiority of one's group. Solorzano 1997 (p. 8) offers Manning Marable's definition which underscores the significant dimension of 'education into ignorance': racism is "a system of ignorance, exploitation, and power used to oppress African Americans, Latinos, Asians, Pacific Americans, American Indians, and other people on the basis of ethnicity, culture, mannerisms and color". While Marable's definition tries to be expansive, it can be misleading. It gives the impression that the race that is conspicuously absent in the list of races (Caucasian) is the only one that can be guilty of racism. Though the race is normally associated with racism, it does not have the monopoly of racist ideology. Notwithstanding the danger in Marable's definition, it is important to pay attention to the place of ignorance in racism. As an ideology, racism flourishes in part due to ignorance as a strategic tool to justify racial superiority. Stereotype is closely related to racism. From Fela's track and my experience at a Münster gymnasium to various images and narratives around Europe and America, there are stereotypes with racial undertones arising from years of 'education into ignorance'.

Regarding the (ab)use of images of Africa for development fund drives, I learnt of the normalisation of an immorality referred to as 'Development/Poverty Pornography'. This is the public display of the poor's nudity to raise monies in the West, without consideration of the ethical propriety of such (Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007, p. 81). Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007 (p. 81) combine poverty and pornography to form '*poornography*' as a tool of selling compassion "to gain maximum donor response." This is "compassion usury" which means "inundation of collective emotionalism – to mobilise the public's conscience and support." Closely related to *poornography* is development tourism, i.e. supposed adventurous journeys to the areas of the Global South in dire needs in order to gather materials and first-hand information for campaigns in the Global North. However, these tourists live in opulence, moving around in state of the art cars, only going to rural and suffering people to take pictures, record few narratives and sound bites. On their return to their homelands, they wear the toga of experts on Africa, lecturing on African culture, religion and anything about Africa, garnering in the process several awards, and of course more funds to make repeated development safari (82).

One can see a connection between the lesson above and the concept of 'positionality'. This refers to the contextual distance between a researcher and the subject of research. This distance explains the identity of the researcher in relation to the subject (Anyidoho, p. 28). Positionality underscores the circumstances surrounding the production of research outcome, especially the relative perspective of the researcher. Due to an acclaimed close affinity between a researcher and the subject, the 'positioned' researcher is considered an expert on the subject. This is a dimension of 'insider scholarship'. We can see how

this plays out in the production and sustenance of popular images of Africa. Development experts, Africanist scholars, and African collaborators in development fund campaigns all have authority in perpetuating dominant African images in the West. This increases the allure of 'insider advocacy' and 'development tourism'.

This leads me to some ethical concerns regarding the deployment of images about Africa in the West. These images of Africa and how they are used are not ethically neutral. A case is made for '*poornography*' as a means of invoking charity towards the poor. The intention to raise awareness and money for the poor is good. However, good intention is insufficient. We know that the road to hell is paved with many good intentions. Beyond the goodness of intention, other dimensions of a human event must be good or neutral. The goodness of an intention does not necessarily cover that of the means. The means to an end must be good or else one commits unethical practice. The way images of Africa has been deployed especially among development experts and western politicians leaves one with the unethical message "The end justifies the means." This utilitarian calculus invokes another dictum, "the highest good to the greatest number." According to this dictum, consideration of human action is for the most decisive number. Unfortunately, in the use of African images, the rightness of action is calculated not on actual number of persons overall. It is calculated based on the actual audience and those who 'buy' into the narrative. What will most serve or act upon the audience is the ethically right thing to do. This questionable ethical disposition encourages quirk reasoning that favours theory based on stereotypes and not comprehensive data. There is no need to present comprehensive pictures. In the end, Africa remains trapped as a victim of 'do-gooders' (Dolinar/Sitar 2013, p. 21). Indeed, do-gooders sometimes are caught in ethical dilemmas: focus more on fundraising or present the true picture of why Africa is low on Human Development Index. They choose images of poverty over the full picture. Poverty sells. Accordingly, it seems ethically fair to keep using the images of archetypical victims (children and women) provided there are solidary responses to these bearers of African fate (Dolinar/Sitar 2013, pp. 25–26). The key challenge to development experts and Western benefactors is in the form of a question: How can people be charitable without patronising the poor?

Africans who use these images of their peoples, generated sometimes from different contexts and disseminated without the permission of the people, contrary to what is the norm in the West, are acting also unethically. They are guilty of bad will, because with their lies they intentionally mislead the ignorant in Europe and America. Furthermore, these Africans are contributing to the reinforcement of Euro-American superiority complex. This further impacts negatively on Africans residing in Europe and North America, because they are constantly inundated with deeply entrenched stereotypes.

With regard to the role of educational institutions, it is unethical to short-change students' right to know the truth as objectively as possible. It is inexcusable for pupils to remain geographically ignorant about Africa. It is unethical to continue to demonstrate bad will which deliberately misleads innocent minds by presenting selective data just to perpetuate racist ideologies. Murunga 2008 (p. 51) and Bason 2011 (pp.

6–7) argue persuasively that even in the last two decades very little of what was published in the West on Africa is based on actual research on the peoples and realities of the continent. From my experiences I agree with Murunga and Bason that students passing through educational institutions in Europe and North America today cannot boast of accurate and current information on Africa. Beyond this, the materials presented to students subtly construct an ethics that is unsustainable in a globalised world in search of authentic humanism. While authors of books on Africa might argue that they are presenting the values of sympathy for and solidarity with Africa, they sacrifice the value of holistic, professional and critical analysis of problems, issues and prospects (Dolinar/Sitar 2013, p. 29). Unfortunately, students internalise this approach to the world. Yet, there are lots of online materials that can fill the void. "Teaching Tolerance" Project and "Exploring Africa" are good places to begin.

Beyond Prevalent Images of Africa and Ignorance

African scholars from the continent will opine that detaching the history of Africa, especially that of the trio of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism, cannot be the route to empowerment and development (Soyinka 2000; Janis 2008). Accordingly, one should insist that if the coming generations in the West will not inherit the prevailing racist images of Africa and their ancestors' ignorance, then they have to know that "Africa is a victim of historical tragedies – the trilogy of slavery, colonialism and neo-colonialism (TSCN)" (Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007, p. 91). Indeed, what Africa needs for its development is less of 'usury compassion' arising from '*poornography*', but more of justice, partnership of equals and fair trade (Quist-Adade/van Wyk 2007, pp. 90–92; Stiglitz/Charlton 2007). Dolinar/Sitar 2013 (p. 31) argue that it is possible to promote counter images as way of balance. The Irish African Centre's project can inspire. The Centre developed a visual concept captioned "Africa Also Smiles". It is an educational poster meant for Europeans, with a completely different continent from the one they are used to. The poster shows "people smiling, being happy and living in good houses." The poster's underlying slogan is pertinent: "The dignity and resilience of Africa's people must not be disregarded despite the scars of war, poverty and disease" (31). This is helpful because it presents the variety of Africa's lived reality. If European and North American teachers want to challenge themselves to adopt a holistic and critical approach to the study and teaching of Africa and move beyond internalised ignorance, Solorzano 1997 (pp. 14–15) offers a process. First, there should be content analysis of alternative images of Africans. Second, students should view and discuss documentation-movies on the history and contemporary conditions of Africans. Third, comparative content analysis of curriculum is recommended, examining the texts on Africa by non-African experts and alternative texts produced by Africans in Africa. Fourth, there should be a more inductive approach and engagement between students and real Africans who are custodians of African cultures and worldview even in the Euro-American contexts. Fundamentally, critical thinking is necessary in the classrooms and it empowers staff and students to understand stereotypes and the role of race.

Conclusion

The 'virtual *poornography*' in European and American classrooms and the media have historical and intellectual inspiration. The Other as African in Euro-American thought is a figure of 'exoticism'. Exoticism is a label given by "the bourgeois subject, 'a man unable to imagine the Other'" (Janis 2008, p. 6). 'Exoticism' paradoxically shows openness to and obliterates difference. It accepts difference that the perceived 'other' is not the same as the perceiver. Evidently, from this heritage, the African as other was not a 'Neighbour'. This is the crux of the various images and narratives presented in this contribution. One can say like Levinas (1981, p. 128) that the humanism claimed during the Modernity of Hegel and late Modernity of Jefferson was not human enough. We inherited this insufficiency. It behoves the protégés of that Modernity today and the descendants of 'exotic' Africa to strive towards an authentic humanism that recognises the Other as 'Neighbour'. This is how the mentality in the Euro-American worlds towards Africans and Africans in Diaspora can begin to change positively in the classroom, the media, and among development experts.

References

- Anyidoho, N. A. (2008):** Identity and Knowledge Production in the Fourth Generation. *Africa Development*, V. 33, I. 1. P. 25–39.
- Bason, F. (2011):** Dispelling Stereotypes and False Presumptions about Africa. In: Leslie, A. N. (Ed.): *Iroyin: Taking Africa to the Classroom* (pp. 6–7). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida's Center for African Studies.
- Brennan, W. (1995):** *Dehumanizing the Vulnerable: When Word Games Take Lives*. Toronto; Lewiston, NY: Life Cycle Books.
- Bujo, B. (1998):** The Ethical Dimension of Community: The African Model and the Dialogue between North and South (C. Nganda, Trans.). Nairobi: Paulines.
- Dolinar, M.,/Sitar, P. (April 2013):** The Use of Stereotypical Images of Africa in Fundraising Campaigns. *European Scientific Journal*, V. 9, I. 11. P. 20–32.
- Exploring Africa!** (2014) (Without author) (Retrieved from exploringafrica.matrix.msu.edu/teachers [15.09.2014]).
- Ilesanmi, S. (2001):** Religion and Public Life in Africa: A Comparative Perspective on the Ethics of Responsibility. In: Davis, W. (Ed.): *Taking Responsibility: Comparative Analysis* (pp. 253–271). Charlottesville; London: University Press of Virginia.
- I see Africa as world's next major economic success story – Obama** (2014) (Without author) (August 1, 2014). *Vanguard* (Retrieved from <http://www.vanguardngr.com/2014/08/see-africa-worlds-next-major-economic-success-story-obama/#sthash.yxX71kO9.dpuf> [01.08.2014]).
- Janis, M. (2008):** *Africa after Modernism: Transitions in Literature, Media and Philosophy*. New York, NY; London: Routledge.
- Jones, D. (2013):** Exploring the International Knowledge of Students in a College of Education. *International Journal of Global Education*, V. 2, I. 3. P. 46–58.
- Mkandawire, T. (2011):** *Running While Others Walk: Knowledge and the Challenge of Africa's Development*. *Africa Development*, V. 36, I. 2. P. 1–36.
- Murunga, G. R. (2008):** Thoughts on Intellectual and Institutional Links between African and Black Studies. *Africa Development*, V. 33, I. 1. P. 40–66.
- Povey, J. (1970):** Political Protest in the African Novel in English. In: Rotberg, R./Mazrui, A. (Eds.): *Protest and Power in Black Africa* (pp. 823–853). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
- Quist-Adade, C./van Wyk, A. (2007):** The Role of NGOs in Canada and the USA in the Transformation of the Socio-Cultural Structures in Africa. *Africa Development*, V. 32, I. 2. P. 66–96.
- Randolph, B. (Fall 2008):** I Didn't Know There Were Cities in Africa! *Teaching Tolerance*. (Retrieved from <http://www.tolerance.org/magazine/number-34-fall-2008/feature/i-didnt-know-there-were-cities-africa> [09.09.2014]).
- Rashe, S. (April 23, 2012):** On Being an African in the US: Navigating an Endless Web of Stereotypes. *The Student Union*. (Retrieved from <http://blogs.voanews.com/student-union/2012/04/23/on-being-an-african-in-the-us-navigating-an-endless-web-of-stereotypes> [09.09.2014]).
- Solorzano, D. (Summer 1997):** Images and Words that Wound: Critical Race Theory, Racial Stereotyping, and Teacher Education. *Teacher Education Quarterly* V. 24, I. 3. P. 5–19.
- Soyinka, W. (2000):** *The Burden of Memory, the Muse of Forgiveness*. Ibadan; New York, NY; Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Stiglitz, J./Charlton, A. (2007):** *Fair Trade for All: How Trade Can Promote Development* (Paperback & revised ed.). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Teaching Tolerance.** (2014) (Without author) (Retrieved, from www.teachingtolerance.org/search/apachesolr_search/Africa [15.09.2014]).
- Understanding the Size of Africa.** (2011) (Without author) In: Leslie, A. N. (Ed.): *Iroyin: Taking Africa to the Classroom* (pp. 4). Gainesville, FL: University of Florida's Center for African Studies.

Raymond Olusesan Aina

stammt aus Nigeria, ist Priester der katholischen Kirche und gehört dem einheimischen Missionsorden „Missionaries of St. Paul“ an. Nach Promotion in theologischer Ethik an der Universität Leuven, Belgien, über die Rolle der Kirche in der Friedensarbeit in seinem Land (2010) arbeitet er als Professor und Studienpräfekt am ordenseigenen Priesterseminar in Gwagwadala, Abuja. Er ist Herausgeber des „Abuja Journal of Philosophy and Theology“.